

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 6, 2011

Members and Alternates Present: Dee Lacey, Bill Struble, Dick Nock, Jean-Pierre Wolff, Richard Hawley, Eric Michielssen, R. Don Warden, Lisen Bonnier, Charles Pritchard, David Pruitt, Mary Bianchi, Anthony Stornetta, Marty Settevendemie, Noah Small, and Tom Ikeda

Absent Members: Mark Pearce, Richard Quandt, Neil Roberts, Joy Fitzhugh

Guests Present: Susan McDonald, Hearst Ranch

Staff: Marty Settevendemie and Lynda Auchinachie, Agriculture Department

Call to Order: 6:15 PM. Quorum Present.

- **Open Comment:** None.

1. Agency Reports & Member Announcements/Reports:

- ALAB members indicated the unusual June rain benefitted crops with the exception of cut hay still on the ground.
- The Agriculture Department is in the process of filing for a disaster declaration due to damage that occurred to wine grape vineyards during the April 8 and 9, 2011, freeze event.
- The Agriculture Department provided monthly Departmental Announcements and Planning Department Monthly updates. ALAB members requested that this information be provided as a PDF file in addition to the printed version.
- Marty Settevendemie provided a departmental staffing update. Marty indicated that approval has been gained from the Administration Office to fill both a Deputy and Inspector Biologist position through internal promotion. A one-half time Technician position will remain vacant due to budget uncertainties. Marty shared that Mike Isensee has left the department but his former Agricultural Resource Specialist position remains in the 11-12 budget and the Administration Office will provide direction on filling the vacancy.

2. Previous Minutes:

MOTION: Approve minutes: **Motion – Bill Struble. 2nd – Rick Hawley. Approved: Unanimous. Abstentions: none.**

3. EnergyWise Plan Subcommittee Report (Chair Lacey)

- Chair Dee Lacey opened the discussion by summarizing the proposed EnergyWise Plan as it relates to agriculture and requested subcommittee members share their comments regarding the plan so such comments could be incorporated into the formal ALAB comment letter to James Caruso, Department of Planning and Building.
- Eric Michielssen indicated that there needs to be incentives for farmers and ranchers to install energy saving projects. Eric suggested that the Farm Bill is problematic as funding is being reduced for energy projects. Eric recommended that ALAB members request the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to send a letter to federal representatives indicating that incentives are necessary to participate in EnergyWise programs and Farm Bill incentive funding should be available.
- Anthony Stornetta agreed there needs to be incentives to implement energy saving projects. He indicated the EnergyWise document could be improved by identifying measures ranchers are

currently implementing, such as Rangeland Management Plans, that reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and energy use. Anthony also questioned the percentage of GHG emissions that are attributed to agriculture as it appears high and we do not have any dairy facilities.

- Mary Bianchi explained the background of the GHG numbers and indicated that the incorporated areas (cities such as San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles etc.) have been removed from the calculation and therefore the percentage of GHG emissions attributed to agriculture is higher because the majority of the urban areas have been removed.
- Chuck Pritchard shared USDA data and other research regarding carbon sequestration potential of rangeland. The research cited is specific to areas east of the Rocky Mountains where conditions are different from California. However, he indicated it is clear there are practices currently being implemented by California cattlemen that reduce energy consumption and provide for sequestration.
- Mary Bianchi responded to questions regarding the degree to which annual grazing lands provide carbon sequestration. Mary indicated there is considerable conversation about sequestration potential but there is not a lot of conclusive data at this time. She recommended caution when identifying mitigation potential for GHG emissions associated with grazing lands because of the absence of completed studies. The good news is that there is considerable ongoing research to determine sequestration potential. Noah Small shared knowledge of a study from Marin County that indicated there was zero evidence that there is carbon sequestration associated with grasslands in California. Susan McDonald recommended there needs to be a new methodology to conduct how much carbon storage capacity exists throughout the country.
- Mary Bianchi recommended that the EnergyWise Plan needs to clearly explain how the GHG emissions information was calculated in the Introduction Section, Figure 3.4 and Table 4.1. Footnotes need to be incorporated to remind the reader that these are baseline emissions for unincorporated areas of the county only and that the incorporated urban areas have been removed from the calculation. This explanation would help explain why the emissions contributed to the agriculture sector are higher than statewide averages. Mary also shared Louise Jackson's research that indicated the rate of GHG emissions in urban areas is 70 times the rate of agriculture. For this reason, agricultural land preservation is a key mitigation strategy. One of the mitigation strategies in the document needs to be preservation of agricultural operations
- Rick Hawley indicates he agrees with the preservation of agriculture as an important mitigation strategy that should be included in document. Rick also suggests finding ways to utilize the things we are throwing away such as methane. Mining methane and providing low cost loans to those agriculturalists that want to convert equipment to methane should be a strategy considered in the document. Consideration for converting from diesel to methane could be used for Williamson Act program. Rick also supports encouraging buying locally because it decreases amount of trucking coming into county.
- Dee Lacey shared that it is important to encourage community gardens and farmers market. However, we need to keep in mind that the economics that drive county agriculture is not farmers market but food export and diversity.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff stated that sometimes we want to address local issues by thinking locally, however, in this instance we need to address local issues globally. Jean-Pierre indicated there is not one golden standard for carbon sequestration and we need to be careful of the source of

information used. Jean-Pierre shared his concerns regarding the consultant's lack of understanding of the carbon sequestration potential associated with agricultural lands/activities. Data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency is reliable and such data indicates sequestration has potential. Jean-Pierre indicated current agricultural practices are already providing benefits. He also agreed with previous comments that agricultural land preservation is an important mitigation strategy. Jean-Pierre stated that the EnergyWise Plan is a living document and agriculturalists are currently implementing best management practices and will encourage additional best practices as they are developed. Jean-Pierre cautioned that we should stay away from carbon trading incentives; however, we should keep the door open for sequestration.

- Tom Ikeda stressed that it must be economically feasible to implement energy saving programs to reduce GHG emissions and that agriculture operations must be able to stay in business in order to be able to preserve agricultural land. It is important to preserve agricultural land and operations because agricultural rates of GHG emissions are lower than urban uses.
- Rick Hawley agreed that it is important to preserve agriculture and smart growth is a key to doing that. Sprawl should not happen.
- Lisen Bonnier indicated she agreed with much of what previous speakers stated. Lisen shared information from a recent speech by Deputy Secretary Dr. Kathleen Merrigan: Of the \$149 billion Farm Bill, 74% is allocated for nutritional assistance and only 5-6% goes to farmer subsidies; it is estimated that one US farmer feeds 155 people in America; Dr. Merrigan was promoting know your farmer, know your food. Lisen also acknowledged that local marketing of agricultural products is a small, but important percentage of our local industry and we need to look at the energy part as well. Additionally, more agricultural land preservation is needed.
- Dee Lacey asked ALAB members for input regarding the document's discussions about livestock management, retro fitting off-road equipment, water use reduction, and pesticide use. Members confirmed that they are already implementing the practices that are appropriate for this area and that some of the recommended program components do not make sense. Dee indicated she would incorporate comments in letter to James Caruso. Marty Settevendemie indicated he would provide the latest pesticide use data to confirm members impression that pesticide use has be going down
- Dee Lacey also asked for input regarding the Sustainability in Practice Certification section. ALAB members indicated that the Plan needs to be more inclusive and not just mention one program. The plan should encourage all agricultural commodity groups to have self assessment programs. Self audits and certifications should not be singled out for just vineyards. The Farm Bureau, Nursery Associations, Cattlemen's Assn, etal has certification programs that promote water and energy efficiencies. It would be beneficial to either be more general and not name any specific program or name all which already exist in the county.
- Tom Ikeda questioned why measurements were based on a per acre unit rather than a production unit to account for efficiencies through practices such as wide bed production etc. Tom recommended that efficiency be considered rather than just acreage particularly in terms of transportation.

4. Upcoming Meeting: August 1, 2011. 6 PM

Future Agenda Items: Discussion of what would happen to agriculture in the event of a radioactive emergency at Diablo Nuclear Power Plant. Update of progress on the North County Habitat Conservation Plan.

Meeting adjourned: 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, County Agriculture Department.